



# NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

The environment plays an important role in health and human development. Researchers have linked specific diseases with exposures to some environmental hazards, such as asbestos and lung cancer. However, other links remain unproven, such as the suspected link between exposure to disinfectant by-products and bladder cancer. No systems exist at the state or national level to track many of the exposures and health effects that may be related to environmental hazards. Environmental public health tracking (EPHT) is one way to fill these gaps. EPHT is the ongoing collection, integration, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data on environmental hazards, exposures to those hazards, and health effects that may be related to the exposures. The goal of tracking is to provide information that can be used to plan, apply, and evaluate actions to prevent and control environmentally related diseases.

## WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In fiscal year (FY) 2002, CDC established its National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program. The program's goals are to (1) build a sustainable national EPHT network, (2) increase EPHT capacity, (3) disseminate credible information, (4) advance environmental public health science and research, and (5) bridge the gap between public health and the environment. CDC awarded \$14.2 million in FY 2002 and \$14.4 million in FY 2003 and in FY 2004 to 20 state and local health departments and 3 schools of public health to (1) build environmental public health capacity, (2) increase collaboration between environmental and health agencies, (3) identify and evaluate environmental and health data systems, (4) build partnerships with nongovernmental organizations and communities, and (5) develop model systems linking environmental and health data that other states or localities can use. CDC is funding schools of public health to support state and local health departments and investigate possible links between health effects and the environment. In FY 2003 and FY 2004, CDC also provided nine states and New York City with \$4.2 million annually for projects that will link environmental, exposure, and health effect data. In FY 2003 and FY 2004, CDC awarded \$500,000 annually to national organizations such as the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the National Association of County and City Health Officials to (1) promote and increase knowledge of EPHT among state and local environmental and health professionals and (2) enhance collaboration among public health, environmental, and partner agencies and other organizations to improve EPHT. CDC also has established a memorandum of understanding with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and, through the Department of Health and Human Services, with the Environmental Protection Agency to promote collaboration on initiatives related to environmental public health tracking.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

As additional funding becomes available, CDC plans to

- Fund additional state, local, territorial, and tribal health departments to increase their capacity building and demonstration projects,
- Fund technical development activities that support a nationwide network,
- Expand training and education activities in collaboration with national and professional organizations, and
- Expand collaboration with national partners to coordinate technologic standards development efforts for the network.

For more information about the program, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking>.

November 2004